

Self-leadership

Bringing personal leadership to relevance

By Alpesh Fadia



The subject of developing leaders has always been a critical one. Today, creating high-quality public leaders has never been as paramount in its importance and widespread as it is now. Given that 202 million individuals were unemployed globally by the end of 2013 and \$38 trillion were lost in the economic crisis, people's continuing decline in the confidence of our public leaders is neither an accident nor a surprise.

Public leaders are trusted to make correct decisions and do the right things – not for self but for collective advancement. Considering that leaders across many sectors have repeatedly violated the trust we gave them, many would argue that they have caused serious damage to our global economic, moral and social values. These damages can only be repaired if we learn the required lessons, and implement and enforce new rules that would prevent these unprecedented crises from occurring again.

To create high-quality public leaders, we must first begin with constructing a foundation of effective personal leaders. Effective personal leaders are those who view personal leadership as

a prerequisite to public leadership, critical to their long-term success and therefore, are willing to consciously and purposefully enhance themselves through deep self-examination and self-reflection. By doing this, they thereby position themselves to lead others successfully when their time arrives. Conversely, public leaders are those who, besides self, lead a team(s) of people in corporate, government, non-profit, or other sectors.

Considering that the traditional leadership methods we use, regrettably, did not provide the promised return on investment (even after spending \$14 billion on leadership development!), we find ourselves frustratingly unfulfilled of the quality leaders we had hoped to generate. Based on experience, leadership development courses organizations offer focus more on helping people become better managers and enhancing their technical abilities rather than aiming to generate personal or public leaders. Few books and training courses on leadership that gave attention to the significance of being personal leader largely emphasized self-awareness, which is just one of the five crucial

behaviours required to become an effective self-leader. We, as a result, find ourselves being over managed and under led at the most inconvenient time.

But how do we reverse the manager to leader ratio? A new approach, undoubtedly, needs to be embraced – one that calls for individuals to become powerful personal leaders before embarking on a path of public leadership. Even though self-leadership is an all important step in becoming an effective leader of others, many have completely skipped over this foundational stage (either because they were never taught or that they felt it was an unnecessary step in their development process). Without a proper foundation, leaders do not have a reference point to draw from, to think and make sound decisions and remain resolute during trying and tempting times. As a result, they find themselves engaging in wrongdoings and committing errors that end up severely costing them and those who rely on their leadership.

Effective personal leadership, among other things, encourages people to deeply examine and truly understand themselves so that they can make the right decisions — those that benefit not only themselves but also others they lead. Self-leadership also teaches people to be more understanding, compassionate and mindful of others as they learn more about themselves, their values and evolve into personal leaders. In addition, personal leadership trains people to make more sensitive, logical, egoless, comprehensive and effective decisions and judgments. Further, people will realize how they want to be treated by their leaders when they are not in positions of leadership as they assess their own experiences while serving under their own leaders.

Ultimately, self-leadership prepares them to eventually become worthy public leaders. And even if one is already a public leader, cultivating the personal leadership behaviours can be immediately applied into exercising their leadership of others, therefore making them more impactful individuals.

The five key behaviours that allow individuals to become effective self-leaders, which in turn, leads them to becoming excellent public leaders include:

- 1) Becoming Deeply Self-Aware
- 2) Writing About, Evaluating and Reviewing Harsh Experiences
- 3) Tending to the Health of Your Mind, Body and Spirit
- 4) Developing a Written Course of Action Toward Improvement
- 5) Persevering

The key benefits of these behaviours include learning how to 1) become strongly aware and to look inward for guidance; 2) become skilful at taking bad experiences and turning them into positive learning and growth opportunities; 3) improve your focus on mind, body, and spirit; 4) make a written plan for improvement (which has been shown to increase your chances of success by 42%); and 5) persevere. Additionally, these behaviours also can be used throughout a person's life at any age or stage.

The question that remains is how can we put an end to past public leadership failures once and for all and begin to move forward? Needless to say, we can start by committing ourselves to first becoming effective personal leaders. When each of us individually strives to become that effectual self-leader, then we will begin to make quality decisions that benefit not only ourselves but also everyone around us. Once this type of thinking and acting becomes the foundation of a person's core, then s/he will be in

a position to transfer and exercise the fundamental principles when s/he graduates to public leadership. We can then have more effective, genuine, and trustworthy public leaders to minimize the consequences of or prevent severe turmoil altogether.

As we know, a leader has the power to change lives, improve the world, change destinies and inspire others. But if this power is misused then a leader can do just as much, or more, damage as good. By becoming an effective personal leader first, one becomes a role-model and a limitless source of inspiration to others because s/he made the correct decision to first construct a strong foundation.

Given all the events we have experienced in recent years and the demanding and complex world in which we operate, having a robust foundation gives us the needed confidence to prevent any self-induced turmoil from repeating in our individual and shared future. The foundational value and relevance of effective personal leadership therefore should not be undermined. It helps then to prudently choose the correct path to leadership.

Today, we literally find ourselves standing at the crossroads. We can either continue our inadequate, traditional ways or employ a sensible approach to leadership development by becoming effective personal leaders first. Our collective future rests on the decision each person will make. Which direction will you take?

Reference

1. Laci Loew and Karen O'Leonard, Leadership Development Factbook 2012: Benchmarks and Trends in U.S. Leadership Development, Bersin by Deloitte, July 2012, bersin.com.



Alpesh Fadnis is an author of recently published book entitled *The Five Behaviors of Effective Personal Leadership... For Ascension to Public Leadership – A Self-Coaching Guide*. He also is an accomplished business and human-potential consultant. Alpesh possesses more than 20 years of experience in corporate and management consulting by holding positions with Big 4 firms (Accenture, Ernst & Young, and Deloitte), Panasonic, and as an independent practitioner. Email alpeshf@hnt.com. LinkedIn [Alpesh Fadnis](#)

BLESSINGWHITE

Copyright of Leadership Excellence is the property of HR.com, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.